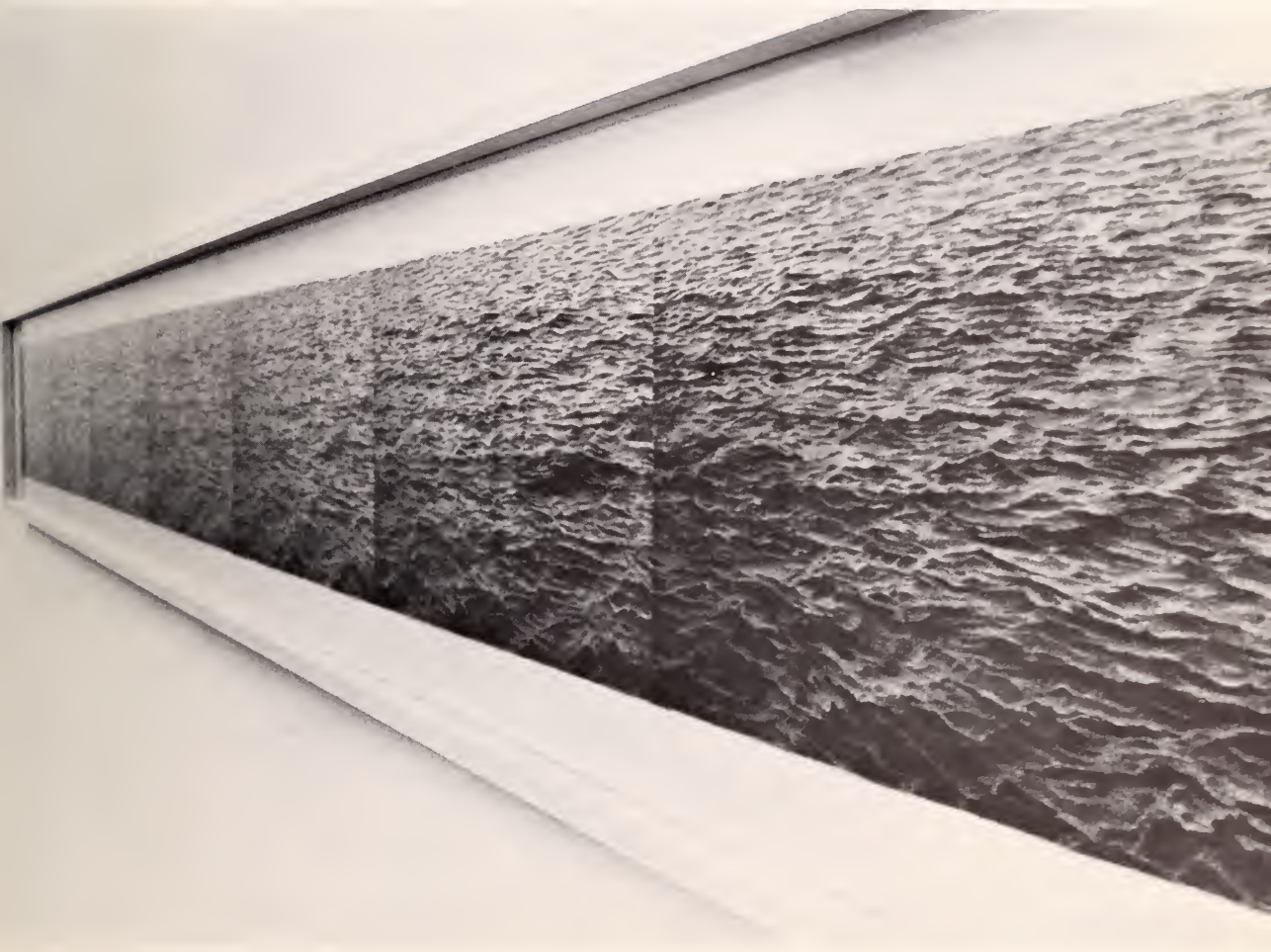


vija celmins drawings



Vija Celmins is a West Coast artist not often seen on the East Coast. Since 1964 she has regularly exhibited objects, paintings and drawings. The subjects of her drawings have been the parched desert, the cratered moon and, most recently, the infinite sea. The drawings in this exhibition focus on the sea and its apparent infinity.

There are a number of paradoxes that come to mind when looking at the work of Vija Celmins. The major concern of her work is the paradox of continuum. She sets up her drawing within a carefully defined border, so the continuum is only apparent because the drawing does not extend off the edge of the paper. To investigate that continuum Celmins chooses such timeless, endless subjects as the sea, the desert and the moon. All these images appear infinite. However, the artist's isolation of the images defines their borders. She freezes the image. Hence the infinite is limited by the artist. In Celmins' case the initial stage of limitation is her choice of photograph; the final product is a translation of the photo image. Celmins' hand and eye transform this objective mechanical image into a personal vision.

The space, light and use of edges define the effects of Celmins' subjective image. She creates a space that is simultaneously infinite and shallow. The

perspective is ambiguous. We can sometimes sight a high horizon point in her drawings, allowing us to feel that at least one of the points of view is somewhere below the picture plane. Still, it is impossible to situate oneself firmly in terms of that high horizon point. The eye drifts according to the peripheral expanse of the drawing. The studied placement of the drawing on a large piece of paper heightens the effect of the frozen edges, which truncate the image unexpectedly. The border intrudes on the continuous space.

The surface reinforces this ambiguous space. No one gesture is more pronounced than any other. The overall effect is what counts. Each gesture interlocks with another, creating a fluid graphite surface. Her drawings are the outcome of personally detailed marks, gestures. We admire the slowness of the process, its precise execution.

It is ironical that Celmins' transformation of the mechanical creates a subjective, contemplative image. The effect of viewing these drawings as paradoxes is not disturbing. The paradoxes are gentle. The ambiguities encourage not confusion, but quiet thought.

Elke M. Solomon
Associate Curator, Prints and Drawings

Vija Celmins

1939 Born, Riga, Latvia.

1965 University of California, Los Angeles, M.F.A.
Teaches at University of California, Irvine.

Selected Group Exhibitions

1964 David Stuart Gallery, Los Angeles.

1965 Macy's, New York, *West Coast Artists*.

1966 Philadelphia Museum of Art, *13 Views of the West*. The Egg and Eye Gallery, Los Angeles, *Collection of Limited Editions*.

1967 David Stuart Gallery, Los Angeles.

1968 Lytton Art Center, Los Angeles. Tampa Bay Art Center, Florida. University of California, Irvine, *Faculty '68*, University of Colorado, Boulder, and University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, *Drawings of the '60's*.

1969 David Stuart Gallery, Los Angeles. Fort Worth Art Center Museum, Texas, *Contemporary Drawing Show*.

1970 University of California, Santa Barbara, *Drawing 1970*. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *Annual of Contemporary American Sculpture*. The Museum of Modern Art, New York, Art Lending Service, *Paperworks*.

1971 Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles, *Group Exhibition*. La Jolla Museum of Art, California, *Continuing Surrealism*. Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *24 Young Artists*.

La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, California, *Earth, Animal, Vegetable and Mineral*.

1972 Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, *The Topography of Nature*. Museum of Modern Art, New York, *California Prints*. Janie C. Lee Gallery, Dallas, Texas, *Drawings*. Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles, *Group Exhibition*. San Francisco Art Institute, *Four LA Artists*.

1973 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, *American Drawings 1963-73*.

Selected Solo Exhibitions

1965 Dickson Art Center, University of California, Los Angeles.

1966 David Stuart Gallery, Los Angeles.

1969 Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles.

1973 Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles.

Awards

Wolcott Award for travel in Europe, 1962.

UCLA Academic Fellowships, 1962-1965.

Cassandra Foundation Award, 1968.

National Endowment for the Arts, 1970-1971.

Selected Public Collections

Fort Worth Art Center Museum, Texas.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art, California.

The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.

Catalogue

All drawings are on paper with graphite on acrylic-sprayed ground. Dimensions are given in inches, height preceding width.

1. Untitled, 1972.
6¼ x 40, composition.
30 x 44, sheet.
Lent by Ms. Masako Watanabe, Los Angeles.
2. Untitled, 1972.
6¼ x 40, composition.
30 x 44, sheet.
Lent by Odysia Gallery, New York.
3. Untitled, 1972.
6¼ x 40, composition.
30 x 44, sheet.
Lent by Barry Lowen, Los Angeles.
4. Untitled, 1973.
6¼ x 40, composition.
30 x 44, sheet.
Lent by the Grinstein Family, Los Angeles.
5. Untitled, 1973.
8 x 97, composition.
12 x 100, sheet.
Lent by Mizuno Gallery, Los Angeles.
6. Untitled, 1973.
8 x 97, composition.
12 x 100, sheet.
Lent by Ms. Riko Mizuno, Los Angeles.
7. Untitled, 1973.
6¼ x 40, composition.
30 x 44, sheet.
Lent by Ms. Riko Mizuno, Los Angeles.
8. Untitled, 1973.
10 x 13, composition.
12 x 15, sheet.
Lent by the artist.
9. Untitled, 1973.
10 x 13, composition.
12 x 15, sheet.
Lent by the artist.
10. Untitled, 1973.
10 x 13, composition.
12 x 15, sheet.
Lent by the artist.
11. Untitled, 1973.
10 x 13, composition.
12 x 15, sheet.
Lent by the artist.
12. Untitled, 1973.
10 x 13, composition.
12 x 15, sheet.
Lent by the artist.

October 4-November 4, 1973

Whitney Museum of American Art

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Cover: Untitled, 1973.
Photography by Taka Fukuda.